

Bloomington Branch Library officially opens its doors

By ALEJANDRO CANO | Posted: Wednesday, May 18, 2016 11:41 am

The grand opening of the brand new Bloomington Branch Library was celebrated on May 14 with tons of fun and educational activities and entertainment for families.

Described by local authorities as the beginning of a bright future, the library is located at 18028 Valley Boulevard and is an important component of the newly-completed Bloomington Grove affordable housing apartments and Lillian Court senior community.

According to San Bernardino County Supervisor Josie Gonzales, the 6,700 square-foot building is more than just a nice building -- is a jewel that will function as a meeting center and a place the community can feel proud of.

"It's about time. This project is long overdue," said Gonzales. "This community deserves the best so that children can succeed in school. This library will give children and adults alike the tools they need to succeed, and it will act as a meeting point. It will create a nice atmosphere."

The supervisor, who has roots in Bloomington, added that having the library next to the affordable apartment complexes creates a sense of belonging and acts as a magnet for future residents.

"The Bloomington Grove family housing, along with the Lillian Court senior housing, provide a unique opportunity for residents to live, work and stay in Bloomington. And the library offers them the right tools for education. It's a perfect combination," added Gonzales.

The project, a public-private partnership between Related Companies and San Bernardino County, completes phase 1 of a greater project. According to Dena Garcia Fuentes, the county's director of community development and housing, phase 2 of the project will begin construction later this year and is set to be completed by the spring of 2017.

Once completed, the project will add 85 housing units to the area for a total of 196, added Fuentes. According to Stan Smith, vice president of development for Related Companies, there are already



Grand opening

San Bernardino County 5th District Supervisor Josie Gonzales cuts the ribbon during the grand opening ceremony for the new Bloomington Branch Library. (Herald News photo by Alejandro Cano)

about 1,300 people in the waiting list for that particular housing project -- proof of the great need for affordable housing in the area.

Bloomington is a non-incorporated community which is home to about 25,000 residents, of which 81 percent are of Hispanic/Latino origin. According to the U.S. Census, 21.7 percent of the residents are below the federal poverty level and the median income is \$48,885.

"This is a win-win situation -- the community benefits, homes acquire more value, and businesses will sell more," Gonzales said. "I'm proud of what I have done for this community and for as long as I am in this seat, I will do everything possible so that the community keeps thriving."

The new library is part of a network of 32 libraries that serve a diverse population over a vast geographic area, county authorities said. Libraries offer access to information, technology, programs and services for all residents, they added.

According to Steven Raughley, library services manager, the Bloomington Branch Library will be used by about 50,000 people annually. The library features a children's reading area, private study rooms and computer lab, he added.

Seconds after authorities cut the red ribbon, dozens of anxious residents ran inside the state-of-the-art building. Outside, dozens more enjoyed a magic show, ate free food and received information from several organizations that work to promote health and social services.

One of the programs the audience learned about was the Vision2Read program, a campaign designed to focus attention on the importance of reading, highlighting literacy-related programs and services throughout the county.

During the formal ceremony, 22 students from the Colton Joint Unified School District were surprised by "Batman" with free books, as part of the Super Readers program.

Inland Valley Daily Bulletin (<http://www.dailybulletin.com>)

Colonies defense attorney alleges prosecutors destroyed evidence

By Joe Nelson, The Sun

Thursday, May 19, 2016

A defense attorney in San Bernardino County's Colonies corruption case has filed a motion in Superior Court seeking dismissal of the case on grounds that prosecutors destroyed evidence.

The motion, filed May 13 in San Bernardino Superior Court, states that prosecutors with the state Attorney General's Office destroyed emails defense attorney Stephen Larson requested on behalf of his client, Rancho Cucamonga developer Jeff Burum, a defendant in the public corruption case.

Burum is accused of paying \$100,000 in bribes to three former top county officials to fix a \$102 million settlement among Burum's Rancho Cucamonga investor group, Colonies Partners LP, and the county in November 2006. The settlement ended a nearly five-year legal battle over who was responsible for flood-control improvements at Colonies' 434-acre residential development and shopping center in Upland, Colonies at San Antonio and Colonies Crossroads, respectively.

Larson was seeking the emails to show that prosecutors had been communicating with former San Bernardino County Counsel Ruth Stringer and Deputy County Counsel Mitch Norton prior to the April 2011 grand jury proceedings and had knowledge they had reversed their opinions regarding the settlement.

While Norton and Stringer testified before the grand jury in 2011 that in 2006 they believed the settlement was not justified and refused to ratify it, prosecutors did not elicit testimony from the two that they had since changed their opinions and believed the settlement was legitimate.

Following a court order in November to produce the records, Deputy District Attorney Lewis Cope informed the court that the requested emails for the specific time period in question had been destroyed at the Attorney General's Office, where policy calls for emails not archived by the recipient or sender to be destroyed after 90 days, according to Larson's motion.

"This is a straightforward case of the people destroying exculpatory evidence that should have been preserved," the motion states. "There is no question of custody and control, and no question that the documents were destroyed."

Kristin Ford, spokeswoman for the California Department of Justice, declined to comment Thursday, citing the ongoing litigation.

Also [indicted](#) in May 2011 were former county Supervisor Paul Biane, former Assistant Assessor Jim Erwin and Mark Kirk, former chief of staff for former county Supervisor Gary Ovitt.

All four defendants deny any wrongdoing.

In Response to San Bernardino Attack, State Senate Approves Sweeping New Gun Control Laws

POSTED 2:43 PM, MAY 19, 2016, BY LOS ANGELES TIMES, UPDATED AT 02:51PM, MAY 19, 2016



The state Senate on Thursday approved sweeping new restrictions on using guns in California in response to the December mass shooting by two terrorists that left 14 dead in San Bernardino.

Lawmakers approved 11 bills including measures mandating background checks for Californians buying ammunition and outlawing the manufacture and sale of semiautomatic rifles with detachable magazines.

The bills, which next go to the Assembly for consideration, represent the most ambitious effort at gun control in decades in California, which already has some of the strictest gun laws in the nation.

Gun bills have traditionally had a harder time in the Assembly, but Assembly Speaker Anthony Rendon said this week he is committed to pushing them through. The bills also must pass muster with Gov. Jerry Brown, who has vetoed some gun control measures in the past that he felt were overreaching.

[Click here to read the full story on LATimes.com.](#)

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People pray at a makeshift memorial for the victims of a mass shooting near the Inland Regional Center in San Bernardino on Dec. 4, 2015. (Credit: Robyn Beck/AFP/Getty Images)



SAN BERNARDINO MASS SHOOTING: Inland response mixed as Senate approves sweeping gun-control measures

2016-05-19 12:31:05



The California Senate has approved a wide-ranging series of gun-control measures that would outlaw assault rifles with easily detachable magazines and require people to give up magazines that hold more than 10 rounds.

The 11 measures approved Thursday would significantly tighten California's gun laws, which are already among the strictest in the nation, following last year's [terrorist attack in San Bernardino that left 14 people dead and 22 injured](#).

Lawmakers sent the package of legislation to the state Assembly.

The debate comes as Democratic leaders rush to head off a gun-control ballot measure advocated by Lt. Gov. Gavin Newsom. They say the Legislature can more effectively craft gun legislation.

Under California's existing assault-weapon ban, most rifles must require a tool to detach the magazine. Gun makers developed so-called bullet buttons that allow a shooter to quickly dislodge the ammunition cartridge using the tip of a bullet or other small tool.

A number of tools and devices, some of which are legal, have been devised to either modify the button or make it work more quickly.

One such set of illegal devices was allegedly purchased by Riverside resident Enrique Marquez Jr., who is charged with conspiracy to aid terrorists in the Dec. 2 San Bernardino shooting.

Prosecutors have said Marquez was the illegal straw buyer in 2011 and 2012 of two semi-automatic assault-style rifles, which he handed over to Riverside neighbor Syed Rizwan Farook, according to an FBI affidavit filed in the case.

Those rifles were used by Farook and his wife, Tashfeen Malik, in the San Bernardino shooting.

The mass shooting prompted a rush in the Inland area for permits to carry concealed weapons -- but statewide, did not appear to change Californians' support of tighter gun laws.

No matter how well meaning, gun control laws are ineffective. because criminally violent people ignore or circumvent laws, said Riverside Indoor Shooting Range owner Tom Reese.

"They're not going to change anything," Reese said of the bills voted upon by the Senate.

This year's mass murder in San Bernardino is a perfect case in point, Reese argues.

"Those rifles were...California-compliant. But they altered them," he said of the killers. "They took the California 'bullet button' out of them, and they put high-capacity magazines in them."

Conversely, in his view, responsible gun owners could reduce or prevent the loss of life in San Bernardino-style incidents.

"If you had a room of 30 people, and we had two (armed and trained) people with guns, we could have made a difference," Reese said.

In San Bernardino, New Hope Missionary Baptist Church Associate Minister Bronica Martindale-Taylor has a personal reason for seeking solutions – legislative or otherwise – to gun violence.

"I've had (Sunday school) students who have been murdered," she said, telling of a drive-by shooting that killed a young skateboarder. "Guns equal death. Someone at the end of the firing is going to die."

To her, it's a question of finding gun control laws that strike a reasonable balance between self-protection and destruction.

"There are always individuals who are going to break the law," she acknowledges. "But...to do nothing is unacceptable, especially when the end result is death.

"People won't feel the same way when death comes to take their loved ones."

A Field Poll conducted weeks after the shooting found that 57 percent of voters said greater controls on gun ownership are more important than protecting the right to own guns, while 38 percent said the opposite and 5 percent had no opinion. Those findings were similar to what the Field Poll has found since 1999.

Outlawing bullet buttons is a priority for gun control advocates, who hope that making it harder to reload would limit the carnage a mass shooter can inflict. Democratic Gov. Jerry Brown in 2013 vetoed the Legislature's last attempt to ban bullet buttons, saying it was too far-reaching.

The debate has fallen along familiar lines, with Democrats advocating a crackdown on guns in the name of safety and Republicans complaining that gun laws only hinder people intent on following the law.

"We raise our children in communities, not war zones," said Assemblyman Marc Levine, D-San Rafael. "Military assault weapons have no place on our streets and gun violence must not be tolerated."

Limiting access to firearms and ammunition is dangerous at a time when the Legislature and voters are easing some of the strict sentencing laws from the 1980s and '90s, said Sen. Jim Nielsen, R-Gerber.

"We're going easy on the real dangerous people. Now with these bills we're criminalizing the law-abiding people," Nielsen said.

In addition to the bullet-button ban and the ban on magazines holding more than 10 rounds, bills approved by the state Senate include regulations for homemade firearms, background checks for ammunition purchases, a mandate to report lost or stolen guns, a ban on loaning firearms to friends, and funding for a gun-violence research center.

The vote in the Senate comes as Newsom, a Democrat running for governor in 2018, is advocating a November gun control ballot measure. Some Democrats worry the initiative will fire up gun-rights supporters, potentially increasing turnout of conservative voters.

Senate President Pro Tem Kevin de Leon, D-Los Angeles, wrote to Newsom last month asking him to hold off on his initiative and allow lawmakers to tackle the problem. He declined.

Peace Officer Memorial Ceremony Includes Salute To Detective Jeremiah MacKay

The countywide Peace Officers Memorial Day salute was held in front of the San Bernardino Police Department headquarters. (Photo by San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department))

By Michael P. Neufeld

San Bernardino, CA – One of the most moving moments of the San Bernardino County Peace Officer Memorial Ceremony was when the family of Detective Jeremiah MacKay was presented with a white rose.

Mackay's End Of Watch was February 12, 2013 in Angelus Oaks. He is one of 32 peace officers in the county — to date — who have lost their lives in the line of duty.

MEMORIAL CEREMONY

The ceremony — held on D Street in front of the San Bernardino Police Department headquarters — saluted the law enforcement officers in the county who died in the line of service making the ultimate sacrifice.

All law enforcement agencies in the county were on hand on May 19 at 10 a.m. in honor of Police Week and National Peace Officers Memorial Day.

San Bernardino County Sheriff John McMahon and District Attorney Michael Ramos were among those participating in the annual memorial.

DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S REMARKS

Ramos, who delivered the keynote address, dedicated his talk to the men and women officers — who he called heroes in our community — and the sacrifices they make while serving the public.

"This was never more evident," Ramos explained, *"then on December 2 when first responders and officers responded to the attacks (at the San Bernardino Regional Center).*

"When everyone else is running out," the District Attorney stated, *"who is running in? Peace officers, firefighters — and they do it each and every day."*

The San Bernardino Police Department hosted the 2016 Peace Officer Memorial Ceremony in front of its headquarters on D Street. (Photo by San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department)

Members of the Honor Guard fold an American Flag during the tribute to county peace officers who have paid the ultimate sacrifice. (Photo by San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department)

Members of Detective Jeremiah MacKay's family were present to accept a single white rose in his memory. (Photo by San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department)

(39)

By Paola Baker

[Print Page](#)

May 19, 2016 5:02PM

Man accused of attack on Daily Press photographer denies charges

VICTORVILLE — The man accused of attacking a Daily Press photographer pleaded not guilty to the charges Thursday, according to county court records.

Steven Andrew Mancillas, 20, of Hesperia, [was arrested Tuesday after he turned himself in to the Hesperia Sheriff's Station](#), deputies said. A woman, identified as Erika Aliyah Ochoa, 21, of Hesperia, also was arrested in connection to the incident, while a third suspect remains at large.

Mancillas was booked into the High Desert Detention Center, where he remains in custody. He pleaded not guilty to felony charges of assault by means of force likely to produce great bodily injury and vandalism with damage over \$400 on Thursday afternoon.

Court records show Mancillas denied special allegations as well as denying all priors, but more details were not provided Thursday. His bail was also lowered from \$75,000 to \$50,000.

Mancillas and Ochoa were arrested in connection with an incident last week in which [Daily Press photographer David Pardo was attacked while taking photographs at Hesperia Lake](#). Authorities identified Mancillas as the suspect in the attack after Pardo was shown a photo lineup last Friday, and a warrant was issued for his arrest.

Ochoa was arrested during a traffic stop where Walnut Street intersects Main Street and becomes Choiceana Avenue in Hesperia on Monday afternoon, according to jail records, and was taken into custody.

Jail records show Ochoa was arrested on suspicion of conspiracy to commit a crime. She was released from custody Tuesday afternoon and currently has no court dates scheduled.

Mancillas is due back in court for a pre-preliminary hearing next Thursday at 8:30 a.m., while a preliminary hearing is set for June 1 at 8:30 a.m. in Victorville.

The investigation is ongoing and the third suspect remains outstanding. Anyone with information regarding this incident is asked to contact Detective Stoll at 760-947-1500 or Sheriff's Dispatch at 760-956-5001. Callers wishing to remain anonymous can contact the We-Tip Hotline at 1-800-782-7463 or visit www.wetip.com.

Paola Baker may be reached at 760-955-5332 or PBaker@VVDailyPress.com. Follow her on Twitter at [@DP_PaolaBaker](https://twitter.com/DP_PaolaBaker).



Steven Andrew Mancillas. Booking photo courtesy of the San Bernardino County District Attorney's Office

<http://www.vvdailypress.com/article/20160519/NEWS/160519670>

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Pioneertown Wants to Be the New Old West

Founded in 1946 by a group of Hollywood legends like Roy Rogers and Gene Autry, the desert community is having something of a renaissance.

By ALYSON KRUEGER MAY 18, 2016

YUCCA VALLEY, Calif. — The Pioneertown Motel is a dusty, single-story inn with 20 rooms in a remote community named Pioneertown, in the middle of the desert in Southern California.

The motel, recently renovated by its new owners, has an outdoor makeshift lobby and offers few amenities aside from morning coffee, Wi-Fi and a parking space large enough for a pickup truck outside each room's door.

Across the parking lot is a street that was built as a film set, with an old-fashioned saloon, post office, bowling alley and a trading post.

In April, the motel was fully booked, with a wait list. Hundreds of music lovers had caravaned from the Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival in Indio, Calif., looking for a party. They found it in Pioneertown where a three-day jamboree called the Speakeasy was in full swing.

Long-legged model-types and their scruffy-faced boyfriends sprawled out on colorful couches under tents outside the motel. They drank canned beer

and smoked cigarettes by day, huddling around firepits at night, starlight and guitars in ample supply.

This setting may seem incongruent to its backdrop. But this is the new Old West.

Pioneertown, 125 miles outside Los Angeles, was founded in 1946 by a group of Hollywood legends including Roy Rogers, Gene Autry, Russell Hayden and Dick Curtis.

They were tired of traveling far to film the westerns that were popular at the time. They built facades and spaces to replicate a 19th-century western town, as well as the motel, where they stayed up into the night, drinking, playing cards, staging duels and then sleeping it off before starting again.

The dream of turning Pioneertown into a permanent playground with golf courses, hotels, restaurants and large homes never materialized. There wasn't enough money or water.

But 70 years later, Pioneertown is having something of a renaissance, thanks to an influx of artists, entrepreneurs and other beautiful people from Los Angeles, Silicon Valley and New York City looking for a new hub for work and play.

Julian T. Pinder, a filmmaker, moved to Pioneertown in 2014 from Los Angeles with his wife, Yasmina Jones. Their friends were perplexed by their decision to do so, initially.

“At first they are like: ‘What are you doing in the middle of the desert? What do you do up there? You are insane,’” said Mr. Pinder, 34. “Then they come up here and stay for a weekend, and they meet all these amazing artists and everyone is just totally laid back and there is a stress level that is gone.”

Mr. Pinder and Ms. Jones were attracted to Pioneertown as an alternative to the Los Angeles lifestyle. “We were paying six grand a month, and we were

doing jobs we didn't want to do," he said. "Finally, I said: 'Forget it. Instead of wasting this money on rent, I can come here and buy 40 acres for 100 grand.'"

Theirs is one of the first homes seen when driving from the main highway into Pioneertown. Mr. Pinder and Ms. Jones renovated what was a run-down century-old mining cabin into an airy family home that has huge windows, a beamed roof, an open kitchen and 40 acres of uncultivated land.

Somewhat by necessity, Mr. Pinder has learned to kill rattlesnakes.

Pioneertown is an unincorporated community, so small that you can address parcels with someone's first name and they will arrive at the right place. You can drive for miles without seeing another human or even a building; people's homes can be about a 10-minute drive apart. The boulders, the sand and the Joshua trees make the landscape look otherworldly. Cellphone service is spotty.

But the remoteness is among its greatest attributes, say people who have moved there recently. Yves Kamioner, a Belgian jewelry designer, and his partner, Hugh Glenn, a retired jewelry-industry executive, left their New York life and their Fifth Avenue apartment four years ago.

Since then, they have bought and restored three homes in the area, including one that came with a church. "The desert is a blank page, and people come here to reinvent themselves," said Mr. Kamioner, 59. "You are like a kid again. There is oxygen up here."

Claire Wadsworth, a teacher, and Nikki Hill, a chef, were residents of Los Angeles when they took a weekend visit to Pioneertown in April 2015. They decided on the spot to move there.

"Someone told us there was a restaurant for sale, and 10 days later we had the keys," said Ms. Wadsworth, 31, who married Ms. Hill, 33, last year. "We were just so in love and wanting something different in life," Ms. Wadsworth

said.

The couple opened the doors to their new restaurant, *La Copine*, in the area about six months ago. It would be hard to find the tiny restaurant, on the side of a sparsely populated two-lane highway, if not for the crowds of people and cars that always surround it when it's open — mostly for brunch, Thursday to Sunday. The crowd could rival that of the newest haunt in the West Village: Beautiful artist or graphic designer couples come with friends to laugh and gossip over juice spritzers and organic stone-ground grits.

To kick off the *Speakeasy* festival in April, *La Copine* hosted an alcohol-fueled three-course dinner of spring pea and tendril salads and *coq au vin* (wine was B.Y.O.B.) for locals and tourists alike.

The local music business is growing. Rocco Gardner, a British-born musician, has built a state-of-the-art music recording studio. “We now have the stuff you need to have Beyoncé come and stay and record,” he said.

This spring, he gave a party to show off the studio. Musicians, actors and other scantily dressed, full-lipped partygoers took selfies in the hot tub against the unobstructed views of valleys and Joshua trees.

The fashion scene, with an aesthetic influenced by Pioneertown's proximity to music festivals, is developing as well. *Promised Land*, a vintage store, opened five months ago nearby. Its racks and shelves are overflowing with Bohemian skirts, maxi dresses, jumpsuits and leather jackets.

Jay Carroll, 36, a brand consultant who once was a creative director for Levi's, moved to Pioneertown in 2015. With a partner, he is starting a men's wear line. With his wife, Alison, he is starting a company called *Wonder Valley* that sells olive oil.

Mr. Carroll understands the lure of the dusty western town. “I'm sure it correlates to the fact that the market in L.A. has gone up,” he said. “There is

also the fact that simple living is such a new hot topic with young people, and this is definitely a place you can do it with it being two hours from L.A.”

Not everyone is excited about the newness of the old Pioneertown. Jim Austin, 58, has lived there for 12 years in a house called Rimrock Ranch on a quirky plot of land with numerous structures, including a red barn with the word “breathe” written on it. Nearby, there is a display of rocks in the shape of a heart that surrounds two Joshua trees. From some vantage points, it looks like trees are kissing.

Mr. Austin came to Pioneertown when it was truly a sleepy nowhere. Now he thinks it is time to move on. He sold the ranch to a young couple from Oakland. “It is a little too crowded for me,” he said. “It was time for me to bug off rather than becoming that grumpy old dude trying to stop change.”

Matt and Mike French, brothers from Portland, Ore., are among those fueling the change. Mike, 27, and Matt, 32, bought the Pioneertown Motel in December 2014, after discovering it while visiting their parents in Palm Springs, 30 miles away.

After a refurbishment of the hotel, the brothers celebrated its reopening, welcoming some 80 friends and relatives to Pioneertown. They enjoyed an outdoor dinner under the stars, a sunrise dance party and hikes in Pioneertown Mountains Preserve.

“We want to be the door to the desert,” Mike said.

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A version of this article appears in print on May 19, 2016, on page D1 of the New York edition with the headline: Pioneertown, the Sequel.



TOURISM: Route 66 towns aim to rejuvenate

By [JIM STEINBERG](#)

2016-05-19 14:04:51



BARSTOW – They had creative ideas, luck and misfortune, but in the end success.

Officials from small towns in New Mexico and Illinois on Wednesday shared their experiences on the economic development potential of Route 66 at the High Desert's first Route 66 Tourism & Economic Development Symposium.

Wednesday's event is a "critical component of our ongoing partnerships as we work together to protect and preserve historic Route 66," according to Jerome Perez, California director of the U.S. Bureau of Land Management. The symposium also promotes "sustainable heritage tourism" and also helps to "enhance economic development opportunities for San Bernardino County" and the state, he said in a statement.

The conference drew more than 100 and is the first activity spinning off from the Route 66 Corridor Management Plan – a multi-agency effort to manage and encourage tourism-related development along a 150-mile stretch of the two-lane historic highway from Needles to Barstow, according to Doran Sanchez, U.S. Bureau of Land Management Route 66 project lead.

The event also takes place shortly after the creation of the newly created Mojave Trails National Monument, which borders Ludlow, Amboy and Chambless.

"This action preserves the pristine landscape of this stretch of desert for communities to build on," Sanchez said, referring to the creation of the national monument.

The 2,448-mile Route 66, often referred to as the "Mother Road," which starts in Chicago and ends in Santa Monica, opened in 1926. It ceased operation in 1985. The traffic shift at that time to the interstate system isolated many communities. In California, the San Bernardino County communities of Needles, Amboy and Ludlow have many empty structures.

In Moriarty, N.M., a small town of around 2,000 people about 35 miles east of Albuquerque, an effort to restore a historic gas station's neon sign stalled when seven baby white-faced owls were found nesting on its upper reaches, motel owner Debbie Pogue told conference attendees.

Federal wildlife agents offered two options in dealing with the owlets, she said – leave them in place until they fly away or take them out and have a human teach them to fly at a cost of \$1,500 per bird.

Pogue and her husband installed a webcam so anyone around the world could watch the owls grow.

And after seeing the baby birds via the internet, Pogue said, people from as far away as Germany and Washington, D.C., came to see the birds.

In Pontiac, Ill., 100 miles southwest of Chicago, they initially had trouble launching projects to key into Route 66,

according to Mayor Robert Russell.

The city owned many vacant downtown businesses in this community of about 12,000, Russell said. They were able to lure the owner of a collection of historic Pontiac vehicles from Broken Arrow, Okla., into a city owned building there.

The result was the Pontiac-Oakland Museum & Resource Center. Other businesses have moved into the area as well, he said.

Each community offers something unique and it's that "culture and history" that each needs to focus on, said Kaisa Barthuli, Santa Fe, N.M.-based Route 66 Corridor Preservation program manager for the National Parks Service. "You can't just be selling Route 66 shot glasses."

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Waterman Canyon arsonist sent to prison



A San Bernardino man was sentenced to state prison for setting five spot fires in lower Waterman Canyon in 2013. (Photo by Tory Brumm-Ward)

Friday, May 20, 2016

By Douglas W. Motley A 30-year-old San Bernardino man convicted of setting five spot fires in lower Waterman Canyon in 2013 has been sentenced to a term of five years in state prison. Though Superior Court Judge Dwight W. Moore sentenced Jaried Michail Escobedo to the “middle term” of five years for a felony arson conviction, it’s unlikely that he will serve more than three months in prison. Though Escobedo had been incarcerated at the county’s West Valley Detention Center for roughly 1,095 days awaiting completion of his criminal trial since his March 21, 2013 arrest, due to time off for good behavior, court records indicate he has already served 1,632 days. With credit for approximately 4.5 years, Escobedo could be set free in about three months. As previously reported in the March 28, 2013, edition of *The Alpenhorn News*, Escobedo, who was 27 at the time, was seen by firefighters and other eyewitnesses on March 21, 2013, fleeing the scene of five spot fires burning alongside Highway 18 near Old Waterman Canyon Road in lower Waterman Canyon. Escobedo was taken into custody after he was spotted trying to run uphill from the scene. When Escobedo discovered San Bernardino police officers waiting for him at the top of a ridge near Arrowhead Hot Springs, he reportedly attempted to run back down the hill, but lost his footing and tumbled downward, at which time he was taken into custody. In the meantime, firefighters quickly extinguished five small brush fires, which had burned approximately five acres, not far from where the 2003 Old Fire had been set. Escobedo was charged with one felony count of arson causing great bodily injury, due to injuries sustained by a firefighter at the scene. He subsequently entered a no-contest plea at a court hearing held on March 4 of this year. At a previous

hearing, a judge had dismissed the charges against Escobedo due to doubts about his mental competence. According to court records, two psychiatrists referred him to a program at Patton State Hospital in Highland that would enable him regain his competence, thus making it possible for him to stand for trial. Escobedo will be serving his prison term, at California Institute For Men in Chino.



EDITORIAL: An overdue streamlining of city government

2016-05-19 16:26:39

The city of San Bernardino reached a critical milestone Monday, as the City Council voted 5-2 to put on the ballot a new city charter. The charter will next be vetted by an outside attorney and two public hearings will follow before being officially placed on the November ballot. The proposed charter makes a number of changes that not only will simplify the governing document for the city, replacing 49 pages with 12, but also reforms city government in a manner that actually makes sense.

Under the current charter, in addition to the City Council and mayor, the positions of city clerk, city attorney and city treasurer all are elected. Overlapping responsibilities, particularly with respect to appointing positions between the mayor and council, have made it difficult at times for things to get done. No other city has a system of government similar to that of San Bernardino.

“The city’s charter is far more complex and detailed than is typically associated with a city of this size,” explains San Bernardino’s Plan of Adjustment. “This results in numerous operational inefficiencies and uncertainties.”

The city’s charter review committee, which has worked diligently for two years to come up with a sensible alternative, determined a more proper system would be a city council-city manager form of government.

Under this arrangement, the elected mayor and council would appoint the city manager, who would serve as chief executive officer, as well as the city clerk and city attorney. The duties of the presently elected treasurer would be assigned to the finance department.

Phil Savage, chairman of the charter review committee, argued the proposed charter would streamline government and provide a governing document that the public could readily understand. And in its initial form, we agree that the proposal of the committee certainly accomplishes those goals.

Unfortunately, the council majority felt it necessary to add language to the proposed charter to require that the city commit to keeping policing services in-house, effectively tying the hands of future councils who might be interested in exploring alternative means of service delivery.

Councilwoman Virginia Marquez argued the city needed to have a charter-mandated municipal police department in order to provide potential recruits greater certainty of their employment prospects.

Though welcomed by the city’s police union, such a move will primarily serve to restrict the city’s options in the future. If San Bernardino has learned anything from its bankruptcy, the importance of being open to alternative means of service delivery ought to be one of them.

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San Bernardino County Sun (<http://www.sbsun.com>)

San Bernardino Art Night brings hundreds downtown

By Ryan Hagen, The Sun

Thursday, May 19, 2016



SAN BERNARDINO >> After months of work involving eight partner organizations, the chairwoman of the city's fine arts commission only had to wave her hand to demonstrate her point.

"The arts," said chairwoman Dorothy Garcia, "are alive and well in San Bernardino."

Music, paintings, chalk art and more were on display for three hours in downtown, part of the inaugural Art Night, meant to prove that the arts are alive — and so is downtown.

At least 200 came to the event, with many saying they were proud to see the display.

"I've lived here for years, and this is what we needed to have happen," said Dianne Stacey, 71, who came with three family members. "I'm so glad this is happening."

Displays were spread across the downtown area surrounding City Hall, from Court Street Square to the Mexican Consulate.

Although maps were available showing which groups had displays in which building — Cal State San Bernardino art in Vanir Tower and the Guatemalan Consulate, and art from San Bernardino Valley College in the City Hall lobby, for example — some patrons said they didn't know how to find all the art.

Still, the positive feelings were obvious and contagious, said Gwen Dowdy-Rodgers, a member of the San Bernardino City Unified school board.

"There are smiles everywhere," Dowdy-Rodgers said. "This is great news for our city, the way they're bringing so many things together."

Besides artwork from students from middle school to university level, the event also featured three food trucks, part of an attempt to leverage enthusiasm with another downtown event — the food trucks that come downtown for the "[Third Thursday](#)" of every month.

City officials hope to expand the event next year, Mayor Carey Davis said in a brief opening speech.

"We hope this event will become a tradition for our community," Davis said. "Enjoy the arts, enjoy the festival, but most of all, enjoy our community."



SAN BERNARDINO: Burned body found, chase ensues, in 27th homicide of 2016 (UPDATE)

By [BEATRIZ VALENZUELA](#)

2016-05-20 06:34:18



San Bernardino police this morning are investigating the city's 27th homicide of 2016 at the corner of Sixth Street and Sterling Avenue, and a man was taken into custody following a pursuit that led law enforcement from the grisly scene to the city of Paramount.

Two juveniles are also in custody, said San Bernardino police Lt. Richard Lawhead.

Detectives are focusing their efforts on a trash bin in a vacant field off Sixth Street where initial reports show that a body was burned.

Sixth Street has been shut down between Sterling and Lankershim avenues for the investigation.

Deputies stumbled on the scene around 1 a.m. when three people fled, initiating a chase that ended near Paramount, according to initial reports.

Once the chase crossed into Los Angeles County, San Bernardino deputies asked the CHP to pick up the pursuit, said CHP Officer Francisco Villalobos.

The CHP took over the chase on the westbound 10 Freeway around the 57 Freeway in the San Dimas area, Villalobos said. The suspect then transitioned from the 10 Freeway to the southbound 710 Freeway around the Monterey Park area.

From there, the suspect moved to the eastbound 105 Freeway in the Downey-South Gate area, Villalobos said.

"The suspect then exited on Lakewood Boulevard in Paramount and the pursuit ended on Orizaba Avenue, just north of Golden Avenue at 1:36 a.m.," Villalobos added.

The CHP took the man into custody in Paramount and was holding him for the San Bernardino Sheriff's Department, which was sending detectives to pick him up, according to Villalobos.

In response to questions from reporters about why he led law enforcement on the wild two-county pursuit in a vehicle hauling a trailer, the unidentified suspect said cryptically, "I just wanted to see my wife."

It is unclear at this time where the two juveniles were apprehended.

City News Service contributed to this report.

This story is developing. Check back for updates.

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RIVERSIDE: Victims' families agonize over execution delays

By [BRIAN ROKOS](#)

2016-05-19 17:30:42



Former NFL player Kermit Alexander has been waiting 30 years to the month for California to execute Tiequon Cox, who on May 7, 1986, arrived at San Quentin's death row after he was convicted of killing four members of Alexander's family.

"It's a daily journey," Alexander's wife, Tami, said at a news conference held Thursday, May 19, outside Riverside's Historic Courthouse. "Sometimes he's angry. Sometimes he's passive. Sometimes he feels like giving up and sometimes he feels like fighting like the fierce defensive back he was on the field."

The Alexanders, Riverside County District Attorney Mike Hestrin, San Bernardino County District Attorney Mike Ramos and San Bernardino County Sheriff John McMahon turned out to announce that almost 590,000 signatures had been delivered by Californians for Death Penalty Reform and Savings to county registrars statewide Thursday in hopes of putting a measure on the November ballot that would streamline the process for executing death row inmates.

Kermit Alexander's mother, sister and two nephews were killed in 1984 by a gang member who went to the wrong house while carrying out a murder for hire.

It has been 10 years since the death penalty has been carried out in California.

"We're not asking for retribution, we're asking for payment," said Alexander, of Riverside, who played college football at UCLA and then professionally with the San Francisco 49ers, Los Angeles Rams and Philadelphia Eagles. "When you violate certain rules, you have to pay the price."

Death penalty opponents – who have gathered enough signatures to place a measure onto the November ballot that would ban executions – say that streamlining the system would institute unrealistic deadlines for appeals, increasing the risk of an innocent person being put to death.

Contact the writer: brokos@pe.com or 951-368-9569

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San Bernardino County Sun (<http://www.sbsun.com>)

Beaumont crew used 'strong arm' tactics to keep developers in line

By Richard K. De Atley, The Press-Enterprise

Thursday, May 19, 2016

BEAUMONT >> Six defendants in the Beaumont corruption case used deceit, arrogance and “strong arm” tactics to siphon as much as \$43 million away from a regional transportation fund and instead funnel the money to city projects that richly rewarded them, a court document claims.

Former Beaumont Economic Development Director David Dillon took the action to force developers into signing false agreements that helped the defendants cover the diverted money’s tracks, according to a declaration filed by Riverside County District Attorney’s senior investigator Michael Gavin.

Confronted about Beaumont’s practices at a meeting with the agency that oversees the distribution of the regional transportation funds, former City Attorney Joseph Aklufi allegedly said Beaumont “had come up with a new excuse and if (the agency) did not buy into that excuse, they would come up with another one,” Gavin wrote.

Because some of the defendants not only had positions with the city but simultaneously had construction, engineering, and other contracts with Beaumont as owners and principals of Urban Logic Consultants, they benefitted from using the withheld funds for city projects that they were involved with, Gavin said.

“By keeping the (funds) in Beaumont, ULC was able to ensure that they received the money, with no oversight or accountability,” Gavin wrote.

None of the seven defendants in the case have entered pleas. Arraignments have been delayed to May 26 for some and July for others.

Six of the defendants: Dillon, Aklufi, former Public Works Director Deepak Moorjani, former City Manager Alan Kapanicas, former Finance Director William Aylward and former Planning Director Ernest Egger, are named in various embezzlement, misappropriation of funds, conflict of interest, and conspiracy counts.

Former Beaumont Police Chief Francis Dennis “Frank” Coe Jr. is charged with two counts of misappropriation of funds and is not named in the alleged TUMF scheme outlined by Gavin.

ALPHABET SOUP

The story involves some government alphabet soup, with a dash of regional funding thrown in.

The transportation fund money goes under the acronym of TUMF, for Transportation Uniform Mitigation Fee. The agency that administers TUMF for the area that includes Beaumont is the Western Riverside Council of Governments, or WRCOG.

An attorney for the regional agency that sued Beaumont for the withheld funds, which a judge determined to be \$42.9 million with retroactive interest of \$14.8 million, said Thursday, May 19 that one possible avenue for recovery could be the defendants' assets of homes, property and bank accounts that prosecutors are seeking to freeze.

The judge's assessment is higher than prosecutor's estimate that \$37 million in funds were diverted from TUMF. Altogether, the 94-count case alleges \$43 million was misappropriated from the city over two decades.

The TUMF funds come from fees paid by developers, and those fees are determined by an annual study to establish the amount for each equivalent dwelling unit and keep it consistent across the cities. About half the money goes to regional projects, some to WRCOG for administrative costs, and 48 percent goes back to the zone where it originated.

A SERIES OF EXCUSES

But, according to Gavin, that's not how it worked in Beaumont.

He alleged that between 2003 and 2009 the defendants' schemes kept TUMF money from going where it should have as they used a series of excuses, until they ran out of them. Beaumont was formally removed from the program in 2009.

In the early 1990s, Beaumont brought in Urban Logic Consultants along with owners and principals Egger, Dillon, an Moorjani "to manage the planning, engineering and economic development aspects of the City," according to the declaration.

Kapanicas was "hired by the City around the same time as ULC through his company General Government Management Services (GGMS) to perform the role of City Manager," the declaration filed in Kapanicas' case said.

Urban Logic "designed and implemented the city's Community Facilities District," described as "a revenue generating mechanism that allows money to be raised from selling bonds, to be repaid by a tax on the individual homeowners."

But the district created by Beaumont was "unlike any other CFD in California," Gavin wrote. "Instead of the usual CFD that covers a discreet area, Beaumont's ... encompasses nearly the entire City."

Gavin wrote that the city "took the position that it would not remit TUMF collected inside the CFD to WRCOG," he continued.

EXCUSES, EXCUSES

"Instead, the City essentially acted as the administrator of its own TUMF program, collecting TUMF from various sources, holding on to it, and using it within the City, however Kapanicas, Dillon, Egger, and Moorjani wanted," Gavin wrote.

Over the years, WRCOG challenged Beaumont's various excuses, among which were: Community Facilities District exemption; its claim that credit agreements with developers precluded payments to TUMF; a "parallel" model Urban Logic program called "B-TUMF" which used a complex formula to make credit assignments to developers and allegedly avoid TUMF payments; and Beaumont's claim that other existing agreements with developers precluded the collection of fees.

'FALSE AGREEMENT'

The excuse about credit agreements with developers was especially difficult for the defendants, Gavin said, because those agreements didn't exist.

"This was no easy task because the developers were being asked to sign a false agreement," Gavin wrote. "In many cases, the facility was already constructed by the City and yet the developer was being asked to sign an agreement promising to build that already-built facility.

"Other times, the developer had no intention of building the facility, but had been promised the City was going to build it instead. Thus, many, if not most, of the developers balked at the notion of signing the false agreements," he wrote.

Gavin said Dillon's "response to the developers' hesitation to sign the false agreements was two-fold."

Developers were offered a "comfort letter," the contents of which were not described.

"Dillon's second approach was to strong-arm the developers into signing the false agreements," Gavin wrote.

WRCOG eventually sued Beaumont for the TUMF funds. The case was moved to Orange County in 2010 and in 2014 Orange County Superior Court Judge David R. Chaffee ruled against the city.

Beaumont's appeal of the Orange County ruling remains in place.

"The city is in discussions with WRCOG," interim City Manager Richard Warne said Thursday. "There are ongoing discussions, we'll see what develops."

Warne said the appeal could not be withdrawn without City Council approval.

"Kapanicas, Dillon, Egger, Moorjani, Aylward, and Aklufi were City officials who were entrusted with TUMF funds collected from developers," Gavin wrote.

"Instead of providing those funds to WRCOG for distribution regionally as was required ... they kept the funds within the City for use however they determined, including projects that resulted in direct payments to themselves and their companies."

URL: <http://www.sbsun.com/government-and-politics/20160519/beaumont-crew-used-strong-arm-tactics-to-keep-developers-in-line>

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Beaumont defendants were active throughout the state

Some of those charged also worked in at least four other California cities

By Brian Rokos, *The Press-Enterprise*

and David Danelski, *The Press-Enterprise*

Thursday, May 19, 2016



BEAUMONT >> The High Desert city of Adelanto is investigating whether some of the defendants in the Beaumont corruption case may have committed crimes while overseeing bonds there, Adelanto Mayor Richard Kerr said Thursday.

The Adelanto city attorney, finance manager and city manager began the probe the day after the arrests of seven former Beaumont officials were announced Tuesday, Kerr said.

“Now’s not the time to worry,” Kerr said. “Once we find out if there were any improprieties, then that will be the time to be a

little bit concerned about it.”

Some of those charged in Beaumont also worked in at least four other California cities: Calimesa in Riverside County, Imperial and Calexico in Imperial County and Lincoln in Placer County.

Neither of the district attorney’s offices in San Bernardino and Riverside counties are involved in the Adelanto investigation that Kerr described. They also have not received any reports from Calimesa. But San Bernardino DA Mike Ramos and Riverside DA Mike Hestrin each said Thursday that they would launch new probes if presented with evidence of wrongdoing.

“Just because we filed charges doesn’t mean the investigation stops,” Hestrin said.

Authorities in both the city and county of Imperial and city officials in Calimesa did not respond to requests for comment Thursday. Lincoln officials said they were severing ties with a company owned by one of the Beaumont defendants.

Hestrin’s office has charged the seven former top city officials with misappropriating almost \$43 million from Beaumont. Six of them directed portions of \$300 million in bonds to companies they created shortly after they began working for Beaumont, court records say. State law prohibits public employees from making contracts that provide personal financial benefit.

Charges include embezzlement, conflict of interest and misappropriation of public funds. Scheduled plea hearings for three of the defendants were postponed Thursday, and the arraignments for the other four were scheduled for July.

None of the defendants have admitted any wrongdoing in court.

BONDS FOR ADELANTO

Bond records kept by the federal Municipal Securities Rulemaking Board show that Urban Logic was part of the team of consultants that prepared Adelanto to issue a total of \$32.8 million in water bonds in 1995 and 1996. Principals in Urban Logic who also worked for Beaumont were Deepak Moorjani, the former public works director there; Ernest Egger, the former planning director; and David Dillon, the former economic development director.

Also in 1996, Moorjani prepared water management and conservation plans for Adelanto, in San Bernardino County.

In 2000, Adelanto issued \$25.2 million in utility bonds with help from Urban Logic that were paid off with the city's sewer fees.

Also, William Aylward, the former Beaumont finance director arrested this week, had served as finance director in Adelanto in 2007.

CALIMESA WORK

In 1996, the Calimesa City Council hired Alan Kapanicas as contract city manager provided through his General Government Management Services company at \$65 an hour.

Kapanicas then served as city manager for both Beaumont and Calimesa until 2001 when he resigned from the Calimesa post, which required him to work 18 hours a week.

Aylward, the former Beaumont finance director, also did accounting work for Calimesa as an employee of General Government Management Services during Kapanicas' tenure in Calimesa.

A phone message left with the Calimesa city manager's office on Thursday seeking comment was not returned.

ACTIVE IN OTHER CITIES

Federal bond records also show that Kapanicas' company, General Government Management Services, was active as a tax consultant for cities in Imperial and Placer counties.

The company provided special tax services to the border town of Calexico in 2013 when the city issued \$7 million in bonds to build public facilities needed for the development of the Gran Plaza Outlets shopping center.

Kapanicas' company was involved in at least a half dozen bond issues to facilitate development in Imperial, a small city just north of El Centro. The most recent bond was \$5.7 million in debt issued in 2015 to go toward public improvement in a 368-home development.

A spokeswoman for Imperial City Manager George Galvan said city officials were aware of Kapanicas' work for the city and would respond to a request for comment Thursday. Nobody called back.

A spokeswoman for the Imperial County District Attorney's Office said she passed along a message to prosecutors seeking comment regarding the cities of Imperial and Calexico. No one called back Thursday.

At the time of Kapanicas' arrest Tuesday, his company was still doing special tax consulting work in the Placer County city of Lincoln, said City Manager Matthew Brower.

Like Beaumont, Lincoln has tract-house developments in community facilities districts in which homeowners must pay special Mello-Roos taxes, which are collected to pay off bonds that were used to finance streets and other public work within the developments.

Between 2003 and 2013, General Government Management Services was involved in issuing \$123.1 million in such bonds in Lincoln, according to federal records.

The company's current job consisted of determining how much homeowners had to pay in lump sums to stop paying Mellos-Roos assessments, Brower said.

Given the Beaumont arrests, Lincoln will cut ties with Kapanicas' company and seek proposals for a new special tax consultant, Brower said.

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LOCAL / L.A. Now

Lawmakers block effort to make child death records secret



Criminal charges in the death of Gabriel Fernandez, 8, were filed earlier this year against four L.A. County social workers. (Family handout)

By **Garrett Therolf**

MAY 20, 2016, 6:00 AM

A state Senate budget committee on Thursday blocked an effort by Gov. Jerry Brown's administration to gut key provisions of a groundbreaking 2008 law that requires child protection services to release case records after a child dies from abuse or neglect.

California Department of Social Services Director Will Lightbourne had drafted language for the "trailer bill," to be introduced as part of the state's May budgeting process. That approach bypassed the usual committee review and fast-tracked the proposal for a vote.

Following criticism by child welfare advocates, committee staff issued a negative recommendation and members unanimously blocked the bill from moving forward.

Since the state implemented the original law, reporters have had access to social worker case notes and other files. These sometimes revealed glaring inadequacies in the state's child welfare system, including instances of social workers disregarding policies and allowing children to remain in conditions that proved fatal.

Earlier this year, Los Angeles County prosecutors filed criminal charges against four social workers who handled the case of 8-year-old Gabriel Fernandez in the months before he was tortured and killed. The case was first reported in The Times based on information that included documents released through the disclosure law.

The social workers union has staged protests against the criminal charges and worked with the administration to craft the bill that would reduce public scrutiny of the case files for child fatalities. The state child welfare directors association also supports the administration's bill.

The bill currently under consideration would relax deadlines for the release of records and keep the names of social workers secret. It would deny the public access to original case notes, instead providing abbreviated summaries of how the government attempted to protect vulnerable children.

The family's full history with child protective services would also be reduced, and new restrictions would be put in place to remove information provided by witnesses.

State officials said the provisions were necessary to protect surviving children and adults who were not responsible for the abuse, but department spokesman Michael Weston said he was not aware of any cases in which the current procedure had harmed anyone.

A similar effort failed last year, and the Brown administration promised to draft a new bill that preserved current disclosure requirements and expanded access to near-death cases as well. Instead, it introduced language last week that was similar to what failed last year, and officials urged the Legislature to pass it on an urgent timetable.

Since the law's passage, the state Social Services Department has repeatedly sought to curtail its effect.

In 2013, San Diego Superior Court Judge Judith Hayes ruled that the department had issued regulations "inconsistent and in conflict" with the law and had inappropriately limited the release of information.

ALSO

LAPD union sues Chief Charlie Beck over 'corrupting influence' in discipline process

Failures that led to Santa Barbara oil spill were 'completely unacceptable,' investigators say

Weeks after Bay Area mother is found in shallow grave, toddler remains missing, police say

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This article is related to: [Jerry Brown](#)

LOCAL / L.A. Now

Man accused of racist drawing: 'They're trying to crucify me'



Los Angeles City Council President Herb Wesson. (Los Angeles Times)

By **Matt Hamilton, Emily Alpert Reyes and David Zahniser**

MAY 20, 2016, 8:07 AM

The man accused of making racist threats on a public comment card directed toward Los Angeles City Council President Herb Wesson said that he would apologize but insisted that the drawing of a burning cross and a man hung from a tree with a racial epithet amounted to satire.

Wayne Spindler, an Encino-based attorney who specializes in immigration law, told The Times that he didn't expect such an uproar and denied that he threatened Wesson.

The 46-year-old said his exercise of free speech in the vein of the controversial French publication Charlie Hebdo has been inflated in order to stymie participation. Wesson, the first black councilman to serve as president, was sending a message to City Hall critics, he alleged.

“This is what you get when you go against us,” Spindler said of his arrest on May 13 at City Hall, where he is frequently seen at council meetings. “It’s a warning. [Wesson] is setting an example to tell all the other activists: Stay out.”

A spokeswoman for Wesson emphasized that the councilman strongly supports and defends the 1st Amendment.

"The issue at hand is not about the right to free speech," according to Vanessa Rodriguez. "Rather, [it is] about one individual using racial epithets to threaten another's life, and that will not be tolerated in the most diverse city in the nation."

In Spindler's telling, the blue marker drawings submitted during a May 11 committee meeting in Van Nuys are a portrayal of Los Angeles politics. The card appears to depict a Ku Klux Klan figure holding a sign that states, “Herb = [N-word].” The image of a body dangling from a tree by a noose is evocative of the lynching of blacks in the 19th and 20th centuries.

The burning cross, he said, refers to how the city is "burning down with corruption." The person hanging by the tree captured how Department of Water and Power customers would suffer with a recently approved rate increase.

"We're getting lynched with a 20% rate hike," Spindler said.

The hooded figure that resembles a Ku Klux Klansman carrying a noose, he said, was a spin on the animated icon from the city's water conservation campaign, Save the Drop L.A. Spindler said he just added legs and arms.

And the use of the N-word to label Wesson?

"He gets called this by black speakers, white speakers," Spindler said.

Wesson has asserted a different interpretation, and pointedly addressed Spindler near the end of the meeting where the card was submitted.

“He calls me the N-word and has [an image] of me hanging from a tree,” Wesson told the audience. “So I just want to go on record to make sure that the city attorney’s office knows that this idiot has done what he’s done, not man enough ... to come up to my face and say something like that.”

When Spindler began to respond from the audience, Wesson instructed the sergeants to “show him the way out,” according to audio of the meeting.

“You get out. You get out,” Wesson said. “Nobody’s threatening you. You just need to treat people

respectfully, and you don't know how to do that."

But as Spindler sees it, Wesson silenced him and prevented him from giving a response.

"Rather than challenging me to a fight, how about asking for an apology? He never did. I tried to explain," Spindler said, reiterating that he would apologize for the card. "You don't say, 'Come up and say it to my face,'" he added, cackling. "That's not constituent services!"

The card was later shown to police, and investigators with the LAPD's Threat Management Unit concluded that the drawings warranted taking Spindler into custody.

Spindler said that two days after the meeting, he was following a typical routine when he was arrested as he entered City Hall. LAPD officers handcuffed him and put him in jail, booking him on a felony count of making a criminal threat. He was released on bail that night.

Jane Robison, a spokeswoman for the L.A. County district attorney's office, confirmed that prosecutors were evaluating the case and deciding whether to file charges. Spindler is scheduled to be arraigned June 10.

After news of the arrest emerged this week, Spindler said he has felt anger, fear and mortification. He insists he is not a Ku Klux Klan member, although he sometimes wears a white hood with a swastika at council meetings.

Spindler says he wears the hood to symbolize the "clan" mentality of the LAPD, and he wasn't wearing a hood on the night of the May 11 meeting.

As an attorney, Spindler said he often represents immigrants facing the prospect of deportation. On Thursday morning, shortly after photos of him were plastered in the news media, he had to appear at a hearing in Adelanto for a client, he said.

Najee Ali, a local activist and director of Project Islamic Hope, called for Dist. Atty. Jackie Lacey to file hate crime charges against Spindler. Others have called for his law license to be revoked or for the State Bar of California to discipline him, but Spindler said his City Hall protests should be kept separate from his part-time legal practice.

"They are trying to crucify me because I have a bar license," Spindler said. "Do you want to take a guy's livelihood away?" Spindler has had a long history of outrageous behavior during public meetings, City Councilman [Paul Koretz](#) said. But the councilman said the comment card took things into new territory.

"This is reaching a point where one wonders if he isn't a real danger," Koretz said.

Councilman Marqueece Harris-Dawson, one of three black members of the council, said the drawing of the noose was unprecedented and a "direct communication of an act of violence."

Spindler said he meant no harm, and if he could do it over again, he would fill out his comment card a different way.

"I would put down, 'Boring meeting, vote no on the proposition,'" he said. "But we don't have time machines, do we?"

For more California news, follow me @MattHjourn. E-mail me at matt.hamilton@latimes.com.

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This article is related to: [Crime](#), [Herb Wesson](#), [Immigration](#), [Paul Koretz](#), [Los Angeles City Council](#)

LOCAL / L.A. Now

California's fight against the Zika-carrying 'cockroach of mosquitoes'



Vector control specialists Yessenia Avilez, left, and Randy Garcia clear out the debris from a tub of water in a Silver Lake yard as they hunt for mosquitoes that can carry the Zika virus. (Marcus Yam / Los Angeles Times)

By **Soumya Karlamangla**

MAY 20, 2016, 4:00 AM

Randy Garcia points a flashlight into a bush and shakes the leaves. Martin Serrano climbs a ladder to peer into rain gutters. Yessenia Avilez ducks under stairs and flips over a plastic tarp collecting water.

In a Silver Lake backyard resembling a small jungle, the team -- dressed in khaki shirts tucked into blue slacks -- searches for its target.

Serrano and Garcia spot a tub filled with rainwater, leaves floating on the top. There's movement just below the surface: hundreds of swimming creatures, like tiny tadpoles.

Then something flies out of the water, inches from their faces.

It's an *Aedes* mosquito, the villain in the [Zika virus epidemic that has broken out in dozens of countries this year](#). Nationwide, mosquito control workers like these ones are waging a war against the insects, but it will be a difficult one to win.

“

We've seen them in Doritos wrappers.

— Martin Serrano, an L.A. vector control specialist, on the *Aedes* mosquitoes' need for little water in which to breed.

Aedes mosquitoes, which aren't native to the Americas, are hardier than mosquitoes we're familiar with here and local officials have struggled to curb their spread. With the threat of Zika virus looming and summer approaching, that bug problem has turned into a pressing public health concern.

“This is very, very, very serious,” said Edward McCabe, chief medical officer for the [March of Dimes](#) and an emeritus professor of pediatrics at UCLA. “We wouldn't want L.A. to turn out to be ground zero for endemic Zika in the U.S.”

Though [parts of Texas and Florida are at highest risk for Zika](#), health officials warn that outbreaks could be expected this summer across the U.S., including in Southern California. Experts say limiting mosquito populations is the first line of defense against Zika, but worry insect control agencies aren't prepared.

Zika spreads when *Aedes aegypti*, the yellow fever mosquito, bites an infected person and then bites another. Unlike most types of mosquitoes that prefer the blood of animals, *Aedes* like to bite humans.

With other kinds of mosquitoes, one worker in a truck could spray a quarter of a small city with pesticide in one night and eliminate most of the bugs, said [Michael Doyle, head of vector control for the Florida Keys](#).

But spraying doesn't work well against *Aedes* mosquitoes and their eggs usually need to be destroyed by hand. So “to cover that same area you need 10 people working for a week,” going door-to-door, he said.

When *Aedes* mosquitoes began transmitting dengue, another viral disease, in 2009 in Key West, the agency had to bring in 30 inspectors to work 10 hours a day, six days a week to scour every yard in the city for mosquitoes, Doyle said.

After more than 90 cases of dengue were confirmed in the outbreak, the district added \$1 million to its budget for 10 inspectors to continue the check-ups. But that's not a solution for agencies across the country, he said.

“We just can't afford to double our staffs in most of those places,” he said.

On that chilly spring morning in Silver Lake, Serrano and Garcia, vector control specialists with the [Greater Los Angeles Vector Control District](#), dumped out the water and larvae in the tub. Garcia drilled holes in its bottom, as well as in other buckets in the yard.

They're diligent about eliminating places where water can collect because the mosquitoes can breed using as little as a teaspoon of water. "We've seen them in Doritos wrappers," Serrano said.

In the L.A. region, *Aedes* mosquitoes are believed to have arrived several years ago in shipments of bamboo plants coming from China to El Monte. They're now found in at least [12 counties](#) in California, according to the state health department.

Avilez picked up a watering can and aligned one eye with its narrow spout.

The mosquitoes tend to lay their eggs -- so small they're nearly invisible to the human eye -- at the waterline of buckets and containers. The eggs can survive several months of drought, waiting to hatch when they come in contact with water.

When the Sahara dried up and became a desert thousands of years ago, *Aedes aegypti* evolved to survive without a natural source of water, breeding using the water in pots outside people's homes, said [Marten Edwards](#), a professor at [Muhlenberg College](#) in Pennsylvania who studies the species.

They're so hard to eradicate because they're essentially domesticated, he said. Unlike the more common *Culex* mosquito that comes out only at dawn and dusk, *Aedes* bite during the day when people are active. Often considered the "cockroach of mosquitoes," they can even survive inside people's homes, he said.

These aggressive, invasive mosquitoes have become a burden for insect control agencies in California.

In September, when *Aedes* numbers peaked in Southern California, service requests for *Aedes* made up 90% of all requests to the L.A. district, said Kelly Middleton, the district's director of community affairs.

When Serrano would pull up in his truck to inspect a home, neighbors would flock toward him, asking him to also inspect their backyards. "We couldn't leave a street," he said.

That was before the Zika virus arrived.

An obscure disease once believed to have only mild symptoms, Zika was [declared an international public health emergency](#) this year after an outbreak in Brazil coincided with a spike in babies born with microcephaly. Scientists have since confirmed that the illness, now [spreading in more than 30 countries in the Americas](#), causes many other birth defects as well.

No one in the U.S. has yet been infected by a mosquito here, though approximately 500 Americans who traveled to countries with outbreaks have returned infected with the virus, according to the U.S. Centers of Disease Control and Prevention.

Health officials say that widespread transmission in the U.S. is unlikely because most homes have air conditioning and screens on windows that keep out mosquitoes.

Still, federal health officials recently estimated that 30 states have climates that could sustain *Aedes* mosquitoes, and held a summit last month on improving mosquito control in a time of Zika.

“Everything we look at with this virus seems to be a bit scarier than we initially thought,” said Dr. Anne Schuchat, the CDC's principal deputy director at a recent news briefing. “So while we absolutely hope we don't see widespread local transmission in the continental U.S., we need the states to be ready for that.”

In the Central Valley, mosquito workers were baffled when *Aedes* first showed up in their region in 2013, said Steve Mulligan, head of vector control for a district encompassing parts of Fresno and Kings counties.

They were even more surprised when they weren't able to stop their spread, Mulligan said, adding, "It really does not lend itself to control with conventional or traditional methods."

The agency is trying a new tactic this summer. As part of a trial with the University of Kentucky, they plan to release male *Aedes aegypti* that are infected with a bacteria that prevents their eggs from hatching.

A similar pilot project in El Monte last year significantly reduced the female mosquito population, said Susanne Klueh, scientific technical director for the greater L.A. district.

But such new control methods require federal approval and will likely take several months before widespread use is possible. For now, mosquito control agencies are watching to see what summer brings.

Last year, the *Aedes* population in San Diego County grew because of the unusually warm weather, said Chris Conlan, supervising vector ecologist for the county. He said they're now tracking the mosquitoes, thought to have come from Mexico in 2014.

"But the bottom line is we're going to have to wait and see what mother nature throws at us," he said. "Because if we get rain again this year, it's probably going to become impossible for us to get these things under control."